

THE POLITICS OF NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY IN PALESTINE

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A THESIS

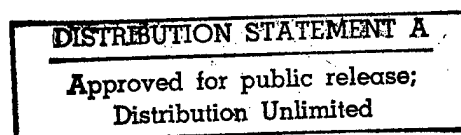
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the developing world there is a struggle over which view of "nation" will triumph. Will the emerging countries create states, such as the liberal democracies of the West, in which citizenship is independent of race, ethnicity, language, and religion, or will they create states based on "nationality," which is defined precisely by the above?¹ This struggle to define the nation is largely internal but is a prerequisite to the resolution of external conflicts.² With this thesis we will consider the meaning of nation, state and nationalism and the academic terminology that is used. We will review the characteristics of nationalism and its development in both Western and Near Eastern contexts, as crystallized in religious versus secular views. From the nexus of the previous two, we will consider the ideologies that are competing to define Palestinian national identity, such as pan-Islam, Arab Nationalism and Palestinian nationalism. Finally, we will examine some potential problems, such as weaknesses within the Palestinian leadership, questions of Islam's compatibility with the modern state and concerns of regional actors such as Jordan and Israel. The external Palestinian-Israeli conflict is also the forum for internal Palestinian struggles over nationalism and identity. Those struggles will determine the nature of any future Palestinian state. Resolution of the internal Palestinian debate, not the creation of an independent state, is the prerequisite for regional stability.

¹ J.K. Urban, "Blueprint for a Democratic Palestinian State: UNLU Communiqués and the Codification of Political Values for the First Two Years of the Intifada," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16.3 (1994): 69.

² William B. Quandt, *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David* (Brookings Institution Press, 1988), 432-3.

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This work is dedicated to my lovely wife Marcia and our children, Brittany and David. "Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Proverbs 31:28-29

It has not been my intent to condemn or offend. Rather, I hope that the people of Palestine will someday know safety and security, liberty and freedom. Finally, I am indebted to a great many, but I alone am responsible for any errors herein.

Kevin W. Massengill
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THE POLITICS OF NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY IN PALESTINE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the developing world there is a struggle over which view of "nation" will emerge. Will the emerging countries create states, such as the liberal democracies of the West, in which citizenship is independent of race, ethnicity, language, and religion, or will they create states based on "nationality," which is defined precisely by the above?¹ This struggle to define the nation is largely internal but is a prerequisite to the resolution of external conflicts.² With this paper we will consider the meaning of nation, state and nationalism and the academic terminology that is used. We will review the characteristics of nationalism and its development in both Western and Near Eastern contexts, as crystallized in religious versus secular views. From the nexus of the previous two, we will consider the ideologies that are competing to define Palestinian national identity, such as pan-Islam, Arab Nationalism and Palestinian nationalism. Finally, we will examine some potential problems such as weakness within the Palestinian leadership, questions of Islam's compatibility with the modern state and concerns of regional actors such as Jordan and Israel.

¹ J.K. Urban, "Blueprint for a Democratic Palestinian State: UNLU Communiqués and the Codification of Political Values for the First Two Years of the Intifada," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16.3 (1994): 69.

² William B. Quandt, *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David* (Brookings Institution Press, 1988), 432-3.

The following quotations illustrate the competing ideologies in Palestine and cause us to wonder, "How long can a nation remain half-sacerdotal, half-secular?"³

Islam is "the very antithesis of secular, Western democracy. The philosophical foundation of Western democracy is the sovereignty of the people. Islam...altogether repudiates the philosophy of popular sovereignty and rears its polity on the foundations of the sovereignty of God and the viceregency (*khilafat*) of man."⁴

"Civilization and progress, which have met their death in our land several centuries ago," flourished in Europe and have "brought about a deep chasm dividing us."⁵

This deep chasm raises the question, "Is it possible to build a modern nation on Islamic principles?"⁶ These conflicting sentiments and the questions they raise depict the internal conflict that is the focus of this work. The Palestinian-Israeli struggle is more than a fight over land. The struggle is also the forum for Palestinian debates over nationalism and identity that will determine the nature of any future state.⁷ Resolution of the internal Palestinian debate is a prerequisite for regional stability.

³ Nadav Safran, *Israel the Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 200.

⁴ Martin Kramer, *Political Islam*, (The Washington Papers VIII, 73. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1980), 31.

⁵ Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine and Egyptian National Identity* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 79.

⁶ Barbara Harff, "Minorities, Rebellion, and Repression in North Africa and the Middle East," *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, ed. Ted Gurr, (US Institute for Peace, 1993), 250.

⁷ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), ix.

CHAPTER ONE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM

TERMINOLOGY

Since vocabulary is the prerequisite of thought we will acknowledge the “terminological chaos” within the academic study of Nationalism. Then we will review the definitions of state, nation and nationalism and review the characteristics of nationalism. One of the great weaknesses in the current work on nationalism is the marked absence of a standardized vocabulary, what Walker Connor less charitably calls “terminological chaos.”⁸ The absence of a widely accepted vocabulary indicates the struggle within academia over the origin, legitimacy, and direction of nationalism itself. For traditionalists, or “Orientalists” depending on your position in this debate, nationalism is a rather pernicious doctrine of fairly recent European origin that offers intellectual legitimacy for any group’s quest for power. For revisionists, or *istishraq ma’kusun* “Orientalists in reverse,” nationalism is the central political issue of our time, unique to each occurrence, and therefore, beyond the usual academic standards of rigor and definition.

The Definition of the State

The state is the power or authority of people politically organized under one government. The modern state possesses a monopoly on legitimate violence and has demarcated borders. Traditionally there was no anthropological component to the state

⁸ Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...”, *Ethnonationalism* ed. Walker Connor, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 91.

and we will maintain this. But the influence of nationalism is evident. Vatiokis' notes that recently the state has become an "identified national-cultural group on a defined territory."⁹

The Definition of the Nation

The definition of nation is more abstract. Gellner describes nation as a recognized, voluntary membership in a group with a common culture.¹⁰ Anderson calls it an imagined, limited, and sovereign community.¹¹ Simply put, the nation is an abstract concept that denotes a "strong group sense of belonging."¹² It can base its identity on anything from political and economic ideologies, to shared geographic space, culture, ethnicity, language, or religion. An example of the imprecision common to this field is the usage of "nation-state" to refer to any country in the modern international state structure. Literally, the term nation-state describes that rare situation where the state is coextensive with the nation.¹³

The Definition of Nationalism

Most scholars recognize the state as a political entity and the nation as one's self-defined group but the term "nationalism" remains fraught with ambiguity.¹⁴ Its literal

⁹ P. J. Vatikiotis, *Islam and the State* (New York: Croom Helm Ltd, 1987), 37.

¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University, 1983), 7.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

¹² Connor, "A Nation is a Nation," 92.

¹³ Vatikiotis, 35.

¹⁴ Connor, "A Nation is a Nation," 91.

meaning is loyalty to one's "nation" or group, but the common mistake is to equate nationalism with the desire to form and maintain a state.¹⁵ Often it is used for loyalty to a state that supersedes even loyalty to a nation.¹⁶ This has led to the erroneous assumption that nationalism is supportive of state creation, that there is some process of unification at work within multi-national states. What is recondite is the dysfunctional relationship nationalism has with state creation in multi- "nation" states.¹⁷ Hence, the US military's optimistic embrace of "Nation Building," (by which they mean state formation) when, unfortunately, successful state integration of an ethnically or religiously heterogeneous population requires "nation-destroying."¹⁸

In this paper we will treat nationalism not as an inarticulate and universal sentiment but as a political doctrine with a discernible genealogy and finite application. The doctrine of nationalism appeared in Europe at the start of the nineteenth century and purports to describe the appropriate unit of population that should enjoy its own government. Nationalism holds that humanity naturally divides into nations, that these nations have identifiable characteristics, that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.¹⁹ It also asserts that the members of a nation reach freedom and

¹⁵ Vatikiotis, 35.

¹⁶ Anderson, 5.

¹⁷ Connor, "A Nation is a Nation," 91.

¹⁸ Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying," *Ethnonationalism* ed. Walker Connor. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 42.

¹⁹ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 1.

fulfillment through the cultivation of their own nation's peculiar identity and by the subsumption of their individuality into the greater nation.²⁰

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIONALISM

With this definition of nationalism we will now review some of the characteristics of nationalism, its appropriation of universal sentiments, the futility of its classification, its inherent illogic, and its impact on state formation. Part of the power of nationalism is its appropriation of universal sentiments such as patriotism and xenophobia. All men feel a loyalty to their country or group and are inclined to its defense and all men tend to distrust strangers and are reluctant to allow them membership in their group. To these universal and timeless sentiments nationalism overlays anthropological distinctions and political doctrines of the state. This is a relatively new phenomenon. This erroneous assumption of universality is why loyalty and national identity centered on political institutions, what Lewis calls "patriotism"²¹ or Kedourie calls "constitutional politics,"²² is mistakenly assumed to be a variant of nationalism, when it is the opposite. For example, Anthony Smith's phrase the "civic model of nationalism"²³ is often used to describe British and American patriotism. But this is problematic. The British and American nations are not defined by language, race or religion but, quite the opposite, by

²⁰ Ibid., 67.

²¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 328.

²² Kedourie, xiii.

²³ Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 8.

their loyalty to liberal political systems. There is no demand for British and American citizens to subordinate themselves to the collective whole nor to reject anyone who does not possess some external characteristic. "Civic nationalism" has become a widely used phrase in the field of nationalism but it is simply an oxymoron. Because of this, true nationalism, loyalty and identity narrowly focused on one's group, is renamed in the current literature as the "politics of identity"²⁴ and the "ethnic" or "non-Western model" of nationalism.²⁵ Again, these delusive distinctions result from the assumption that nationalism is a universal phenomenon.

In addition to patriotism and xenophobia, nationalism draws strength from the incorporation of religious loyalties that are incorporated into nationalist ideologies. There is little doubt that religious ties are bound up in the nationalism of modern Egyptians, Armenians and Greeks. For others the ideology of nationalism takes on the character of a secular religion, it embraces all aspects of the individual's life and promises a romanticized freedom in subsumption with the state. "What I aspire to know and make my own is infinite, and only in an infinite series of attempts," asserts Schleiermacher, "can I completely fashion my own being. The spirit that drives man forward, and the constant appeal of new goals, that can never be satisfied by past achievements, shall never depart from me."²⁶ The incorporation of religious loyalties, patriotism and xenophobia gives great power and legitimacy to nationalist ideologies.

²⁴ Elizabeth Podromou, Princeton Lecture, 4 February 1997.

²⁵ Smith, 11.

²⁶ Kedourie, 82-3.

Futility of Classification

In their quest to understand such motive power some authors draw too close to their subject. They lose perspective, and attempt to define nationalism with the same narrow criteria, such as race, language or religion, that a nationalist might use. But the doctrine of nationalism is comprehensive and allows for anything, language, race, culture, religion, etc., to constitute the basis for national identity. Therefore, "It is misplaced ingenuity," says Kedourie, "to try and classify nationalism's according to the particular aspect which they choose to emphasize."²⁷ It is more explanatory to consider all manifestations of nationalism within the same purview.

The Inherent Problems in Nationalism

There are two inherent problems that point up the inconsistency of nationalism: the irrationality of the nationalist criterion and the inevitable violence of its ends. Even if we accept the proposition that history, anthropology and linguistics divide humanity into recognizable nations, one of the inherent problems for nationalism is its unsubstantiated claim that any "nation," however defined, should enjoy a government exclusively their own. To defend such a proposition nationalists must explain why one similarity, or criterion, should absolutely override all others. But, rather than attempt to explain why their particular basis for nationality is valid, nationalists avoid the issue. They simply declare any difference a valid basis for nationhood if the people but possess the necessary will to make it so. Ernest Renan, in his 1882 lecture, *What is a Nation*, determined that the different national outcomes demanded something more explanatory. Why did some

²⁷ Ibid., 67.

nations exist and others not? What determined a nation's boundaries and limits? For Renan the answer was the will of the individual whose self-determination wills himself as the member of a nation. The Jewish nationalist Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927) offers a clear expression of the doctrine. "Once...the spirit of nationality has so come into being," Ha'am writes, "it becomes a phenomenon that concerns the individual alone, its reality being dependent on nothing but its presence in his psyche, and on no external or objective actuality. If I feel the spirit of Jewish nationality in my heart so that it stamps all my inward life with its seal, then the spirit of Jewish nationality exists in me; and its existence is not at an end even if all my Jewish contemporaries should cease to feel it in their hearts."²⁸ The nationalist use of will may be explanatory but it is not justification for why any embraced similarity can create a nation worthy of a state.

The second inherent problem in nationalism is the inevitability of violence and ruin for the members of the nation. "The national state claims to treat all citizens as equal members of the nation, but this fair-sounding principle only serves to disguise the tyranny of one group over another."²⁹ The logic of national unity in heterogeneous areas is violence. To create a nation-state, on ethnic, linguistic or religious grounds, in a heterogeneous region, requires the greater nation to conquer all the lands wherein their members live or watch their expatriate members expelled from their minority enclaves and returned to the greater nation. "Nationality," the prescient Lord Acton wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, "does not aim either at liberty or prosperity, both of which it

²⁸ Ibid., 75.

²⁹ Ibid., 122.

sacrifices to the imperative necessity of making the nation the mold and measure of the State. Its course will be marked with material as well as moral ruin, in order that a new invention may prevail over the works of God and the interests of mankind.”³⁰ The only defensible criterion for nationalism’s claim to loyalty “is whether the new rulers are less corrupt and grasping, or more just and merciful, or whether there is no change at all, but the corruption, the greed, and the tyranny merely find victims other than those of the departed rulers.”³¹ This is the essential question nationalists must answer and history has not been kind to them.

Impact on State Formation

Nationalism has a corrosive effect on state formation and is particularly disruptive in states composed of different nationalities. When one group begins to agitate for redrawn borders and a redistribution of political power the other groups have little recourse but to adopt nationalism for their protection. The vicious circle caused by Pan-Germanism from 1848 to 1945 is now repeated by the warring nationalities within the former Yugoslavia. A review of the current writing in nationalism and ethnic conflict finds many discussions on the effective neutralization of the destructive power of nationalism. Articles abound discussing the recommended techniques for “conflict resolution.”³² This work is breathtaking in its scope and characteristic of those whose

³⁰ Ibid., 134.

³¹ Ibid., 135.

³² Dennis Sandole, “Paradigm, Theories, and Metaphors...” *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, ed. D. Sandole and H. van der Merwe (London: Manchester University Press, 1993), 6.

intentions are good but persist in the belief that they can solve any problem, even contumacious human nature.

“EUROCENTRIC” THEORIES CHALLENGED

With these definitions and characteristics of nationalism we are ready to review some of the theories regarding nationalism's development in the West. Before we begin I should point out that there is considerable literature that ridicules as “Eurocentric” any assertion that nationalism is a product of Western Europe. This appears to be the result of a popular trend in academic and political circles to blame the Western Powers for the ills of the developing world. This theory asserts that the West dominated and frustrated the development of Asiatic and African countries with the West's insatiable quest for markets and raw materials. A variant of this theory holds that national independence will inevitably result in an efficient and benevolent government. Unfortunately, there is no logical reason to expect such a utopian result.

“It is manifestly not European domination which created poverty, technical backwardness, over-population, or habits of despotism in Asia and Africa,” writes Kedourie, “it is these rather which made possible European rule overseas; and it is not the departure of European rulers -- after so brief a dominion -- which will change the nature of these territories, transform their poverty into wealth, or suddenly create probity in judges, moderation and public spirit in statesmen, or honesty in public servants.”³³

Because nationalism is seen by many as the key that unshackles the chains of Western domination, there is considerable effort expended to explain that Arab nationalism is something quite unique and indigenous. Broad theories about the nature of nationalism are deemed illegitimate and even “Eurocentric,” the pejorative applied to any suggestion

³³ Kedourie, 104.

that Europe's experience with nationalism has any explanatory value. Instead, one should evaluate the development of nationalism, for each country of the Near East, with due disregard to any Western influence. To do otherwise is to reveal oneself as a closet "Orientalist" that mistakes illusions for truth.³⁴ Sylvia G. Haim critiques this approach as it overlooks the impact of both European society and Muslim institutions,³⁵ but revisionists counter that Haim tends to regard Arab nationalism as the result of ideas. Revisionists disdain Haim's description of nationalism's intellectual development because it pays too little regard to social, political or economic factors.³⁶ There are two arguments used to deny a European influence in the developing world. The first is to claim that nationalism was an antecedent phenomenon that merely needed to be "reawakened." The other argument admits Europe's role but claims Western models are simply irrelevant.

Antecedent Nationalism

A good example of the antecedent argument is George Antonius' landmark book *The Arab Awakening* (1939). In this book Antonius refers to a latent Arab nationalism that was vanquished in the mid 1800's by both British opposition and Arab indifference. Antonius writes that this early Arab nationalism was delayed till 1914 and left to await the emergence of Sharif Hussain and his British patrons then ready to support the Arab

³⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, Random House, Inc., 1979) 203-4.

³⁵ Sylvia G. Haim, "The Arab Awakening: A Source for the Historian?" *Die Welt des Islam* 2 (1953): 238-50.

³⁶ Sylvia G. Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.), 6.

nations in revolt.³⁷ But to accept this “reawakening” of nationalism, by which Antonius means racial and linguistic identities, Antonius must explain its “millennial slumber.”³⁸ This is an excellent example of ‘invented traditions,’ “since the very concept of territorial states of the standard type in their region was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War I.”³⁹ Antonius also undermines the existence of a previous nationalism when he writes that, “Without school or book, the making of a nation is in modern times inconceivable.”⁴⁰ Yet, Antonius notes that in 1838, Dr. John Bowring, Palmerston’s envoy, reported that there were neither booksellers in Damascus nor Aleppo, nor Arabic newspapers nor periodicals available.⁴¹

Irrelevance of Nationalism

Partha Chatterjee offers a good example of the irrelevance argument. He acknowledges that nationalism is a European invention but asks,

“Why is it that non-European colonial countries have no historical alternative but to try to approximate the given attributes of modernity when that very process of approximation means their continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control?”⁴²

³⁷ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1939), 37.

³⁸ C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 123.

³⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ed. *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13-4.

⁴⁰ Antonius, 40.

⁴¹ Ibid., 38.

⁴² Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 10.

Chatterjee poses the idea that supposedly rational thought itself is set within a discourse of power. He raises the possibility that power is “not just military might or industrial strength, but thought itself, which can dominate and subjugate.”⁴³ He then denounces the “exaggerated claims of universal validity for those standards of evaluating social beliefs which are only specific to modern industrial society in the West.”⁴⁴ Arguments like these bear a close resemblance to claims that poor test scores must prove the test invalid. The test in this case is whether a given society is so organized as to effectively provide for its citizen’s safety, liberty, and opportunity compared to that which is provided by the “modern industrial societ[ies] of the West.” Since the disparity among societies is overwhelming and readily apparent, the response is to deny the validity of the criteria.

Islamic Revival / Reinterpretation

Albert Hourani touches on Chatterjee’s discourse of power when he notes that the Islamic revival that began late last century did not occur *ex nihilo*. Unlike, Antonius’ interpretation, Hourani describes an Islamic revival that took place under the influence of liberal European thought and caused a gradual reinterpretation of Islamic concepts that more closely resembled the principles of European thought.

“Ibn Khaldun’s ‘*umran*’ gradually turned into Guizot’s ‘civilization’, the *maslaha* of the Maliki jurists and Ibn Taymiyya into the ‘utility’ of John Stuart Mill, the *ijma*’ of Islamic jurisprudence into the ‘public opinion’ of democratic theory, and ‘those who bind and loose’ into members of parliament.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁵ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 344.

The impact of European secular liberalism, whether absorbed directly, or indirectly through a transformed Islam, has shifted emphasis from social justice to national independence and individual freedom. It laid the foundation for the nationalism that later appeared.

THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE OF NATIONALISM

With the validity of the Western experience of nationalism thus established, we will review some of the various theories of the political, philosophical, and linguistic origins of nationalism. The political theory of the origins of nationalism is found in the transfer of sovereignty from the ruler to the ruled. Before the French Revolution the doctrine of Enlightened Absolutism held that the legitimacy of the ruler demanded his provision of the greatest welfare for his subjects. This is the sentiment behind the adage of Frederick the Great that a king is the first servant of the state. The French Revolution was the transferal of sovereignty from the ruler to the ruled. The Revolution gave the citizens of a state the right and power to dictate or change the political arrangements of their society and greatly limited the legitimate scope of the ruler. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* states, "The principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation; no body of men, no individual, can exercise authority that does not emanate expressly from it."⁴⁶ To which Sieyes asks the obvious question, "What is a nation?" He then answers, "A body of associates living under one common law and represented by the same legislature."⁴⁷ This is not the narrow criteria that nationalism would devolve but offers a

⁴⁶ Kedourie, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

glimpse of the doctrine of self-determination that will prove essential to the development of nationalism.

Likewise, John Stuart Mill demonstrates the limited definition of nationality in Anglo-American usage in his *Considerations on Representative Government*. "It is, in general," writes Mill, "a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality." But, quite unlike Fichte or Schleiermacher, Mills continues, "Where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a prima facie case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart." "This is merely saying that the question of government ought to be decided by the governed." "Whatever really tends to the admixture of nationalities, and the blending of their attributes and peculiarities in a common union, is a benefit to the human race..."⁴⁸ This too is the opposite of the nationalist criteria. The Anglo-American view is simply that people who are similar in many things are more likely to succeed in representative government, which demands self-determination. This idea of the nation as a politically defined body was then questioned by contemporaneous philosophical debates.

Philosophical Theory

The philosophical theory of the origin of nationalism begins with the serious disconnect between the theories of inalienable natural rights proposed by the French revolutionaries and the theory of knowledge under Enlightenment philosophy. Just as political orations declared the arrival of justice and right, philosophers announced that

⁴⁸ Ibid., 127.

these things were obscure, uncertain, and incapable of rational proof. Their system of sensory knowledge rejected Plato, Aristotle and the Biblical account of Creation.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) offered a resolution to the dichotomy between theories of inalienable natural rights and Enlightenment theories of knowledge by the rejection of sensory knowledge as a tool to understand morality. Indeed, morality was separate from knowledge and declared independent of the phenomenal world. "Such independence is called freedom in the strictest, i.e. transcendental sense," wrote Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788).⁴⁹ To separate morality from knowledge and call "such independence" freedom, shifts the Justinian view of freedom from "all man is capable of doing until prevented by force or law." Such separation redefines freedom as the result of adherence to internal morality. This internal morality rejects any external command of man or God as the motivations for right action less freedom disappears and morality become meaningless. For Kant the will of the individual is now paramount: "*Sic volo, sic iubeo*, This is my will and pleasure."⁵⁰ Kant's doctrine places the individual above the natural order, indeed, he becomes the sovereign of all. The end of man is no longer to support the ruler but to become an autonomous being, self-ruled and self-moved. Such a doctrine of autonomy has tremendous political application as nationalism is today largely a doctrine of national self-determination.

The proposition that self-determination is the highest moral and political good undercut the French idea of a collection of individuals with inalienable natural rights and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 17.

offered instead a philosophy of individual fulfillment from the state. Post-Kantians such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) and Adam Muller (1779-1829) argued that the whole (the state) was necessarily superior to and essential to the fulfillment of man's morality.

"Between the isolated man and the citizen, there is the same relation as between raw and organized matter...In an organized body, each part continuously maintains the whole, and in maintaining it, maintains itself also. Similarly, the citizen with regard to the state."⁵¹

Such arguments by post-Kantian philosophers suggest a desire to enter the political realm. This new theory of the state broke down the traditional barriers between politics (the life of action) and philosophy (the life of contemplation). Because now, "The end of politics and the vocation of all citizens was that absorption into the universal consciousness which hitherto had been the ambition only of a few philosophers and mystics."⁵² The state is not merely that which maintains, "internal peace and a condition of affairs in which everyone may by diligence earn his daily bread and satisfy the needs of his material existence" but, rather, "that the eternal and the divine may blossom in the world and never cease to become more and more pure, perfect and excellent."⁵³ The state is now expected to provide man's freedom in an internal and spiritual sense instead of the classic external and material sense.

⁵¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Foundations of Natural Law*, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 32.

⁵² Kedourie, 33.

⁵³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807-8), quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 39.

The fallacy of such a benign view of the state is that it obscures the fact that violence is the true nature thereof. "Government is not eloquence nor reason, it is force," writes George Washington, "and like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." Issues of power wrapped in a religious terminology can mislead and sow dangerous confusion. With this confusion came an exaltation of the philosopher and academic and his acceptance as a legislator. Functioning in roles formerly reserved for legislators, these publicists and professors became founders of ideological political movements. Ironically, despite the entry of the academic into politics, in application, men who were skilled in the use of power merely adopted the high philosophical style of the learned and ruled more efficiently. "Thus, by a natural development, it is not philosophers who become kings, but kings who tame philosophy to their use."⁵⁴

Despite its apparent logic, if Kant's theory requires the absorption of the individual into the state as the prerequisite for man's freedom, why has such a state yet to embrace all of humanity? The answer from Kantian philosophy is the importance of struggle in ethical theory and as the explanation of evil in the world. In Kant's ethical theory autonomous man can only become moral through the struggle against his more base inclinations. This absorption and self-realization are not a placid process but one of continuous strife and contention. Such struggle also explains the presence of evil in the world as the necessary result of the transition from barbarity to civilization. Evil becomes the necessary precursor to good: "It is only through turmoil and destruction that nations

⁵⁴ Kedourie, 43.

expand, that civilization and governments are in the long run perfected.”⁵⁵ Kant still maintains the central role of struggle despite the internal contradiction, that history can inexorably move toward a universal morality, although, Kant’s morality only exists within the conscious action of a self-directed individual. In his 1794 treatise on *Perpetual Peace*, Kant argues that differences of language and religion would prevent a universal monarchy and that war was preferable to the despotic peace that would necessarily result. Rather, that peace was, “...produced and maintained by [states’] equilibrium in liveliest competition.”⁵⁶ Fichte develops the idea of struggle and “liveliest competition,” into a theory of war as the mechanism of human advancement. In *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, Fichte argues that “wars of subjugation” between states force humanity forward and result in the successful emergence of the most advanced culture and civilization.

Within this philosophy of history’s progressive nature through state struggle, the importance of self-determination, and the idea of individual fulfillment within the state we can see the outlines of the doctrine of nationalism. To this mix J.G. Herder adds the common European idea of diversity as the fundamental element of the universe. Herder argues that as diversity is clearly the plan of God then perfection is simply harmony

⁵⁵ Turgot lecture *On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind*, 1750 quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 45.

⁵⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 1794, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 46.

among the disparate varieties of creation. "In the work of the Divine Artist, the unique value of each part is respected..."⁵⁷

The impact of this new world view changes the image of nature as regular, uniform and mature to an image of nature that is raw, rough and immature. In this view of nature, spontaneity becomes the greatest value, the gift of those uncorrupted by the veneer of civilization. "The savage", writes Herder, "who loves himself, his wife, and child, with quiet joy, and glows with limited activity for his tribe as for his own life, is, in my opinion, a more real being than that cultivated shadow..."⁵⁸ This focus on the divine nature of diversity had great political application. It changed the idea of nation from the French theory of individuals who exercise political control over their common government into a "natural" division of the human race imbued with God-given characteristics that man is duty bound to maintain. Schleiermacher writes that "every nationality is destined through its peculiar organization and its place in the world to represent a certain side of the divine image...For it is God who directly assigns to each nationality its definite task on earth and inspires it with a definite spirit..."⁵⁹

Since to remain separate now assumes the weight of a divine mandate it is both illegitimate and "irreligious" to take up the customs or language of another culture. "Look at other nationalities," says Herder in his poem *To the Germans*,

⁵⁷ J.G. Herder, *Philosophical Letters*, 1786-9, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 50.

⁵⁸ Kedourie, 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 51-2.

“Do they wander about
So that nowhere in the whole world they are strangers
Except to themselves?
They regard foreign countries with proud disdain.
And you German alone, returning from abroad,
Wouldst greet your mother in French?
O spew it out, before your door
Spew out the ugly slime of the Seine
Speak German, O you German!”⁶⁰

This extreme example of the argument for diversity illuminates, if we look behind the theories, the resentment the German intellectual's felt at their lowly position in German society. In Germany at this time, French was the language of both literature and polite society. Intellectuals transferred their resentment of those privileged Germans who affected French “airs” into an argument against the French language itself. The attempt to give language a political complexion was greatly strengthened after the Napoleonic invasion and the collapse of the Prussian state. If Francophobia began as theory of German literature it ended as a political crusade with an elaborate theory to support it.

Linguistic Theory

The linguistic theory of nationalism is the third theory we will cover and the most venerable and widespread. It begins with the Biblical report that God created different languages at the Tower of Babel as a way to limit the spread of evil in any generation.⁶¹ “Therefore is the name of it called Babel [Confusion]; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” Genesis 11:9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 52-3.

⁶¹ The Bible, Genesis Chapter 11, Verses 1-9.

In 1722, Herder rejected the widely held theories of language, as the creation of God or the product of rational man, in his *Treatise upon the Origin of Language*. Herder proposed that all language was derivative of the senses and, thus, demonstrates the imprint of man's various circumstances and identities. In this sense language is the vehicle of man's disparate cultures. "Only one language", says Schleiermacher, "is firmly implanted in an individual...Language, thus, just like the church or the state, is an expression of a peculiar life which contains within it and develops through it a common body of language."⁶² This theory of linguistic nationalism established language as the external manifestation of the many differences believed to separate men into nations and marked the first criterion for national recognition with its right to statehood.

Nationalism based on language can be used to adjust the boundaries of the state. The historical boundaries and geographical features that are advantageous to the state have often served to justify the expansion of the state to the wider "natural frontiers." With the spread of nationalism those natural frontiers came to mean linguistic boundaries.⁶³ Unfortunately, linguistic divisions that serve admirable academic purposes do not do as well politically. Who defines the language? Do dialects warrant a nation? The problem is compounded in areas of mixed population that are most in need of rational answers and, unfortunately, natural frontiers simply do not exist. A border exists only when someone has the power and will to defend it. "It is absurd to think that

⁶² Kedourie, 57.

⁶³ Leon Dominian, *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe*, New York, 1917, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 118.

professors of linguistics and collectors of folklore can do the work of statesmen and soldiers.”⁶⁴

Summary

We have reviewed some of the terminology, characteristics and classical explanations, political, philosophical and linguistic, for the origin of nationalism. Some of the current theories are reasonable but most are not. Some are technologically deterministic such as Anderson’s “historical convergence of capitalism, print technology and the diversity of human language.”⁶⁵ None consider the role of “accidents” in history, such as the PLO’s loss of its patron in the collapse of the USSR, or Sadat’s loss of his brother in the opening of the 1973 Yom Kippur/October War. Frankly, I find most of the explanations plausible, yet, no single argument sufficient. Some combination of all the factors mentioned seems most likely.

⁶⁴ Kedourie, 120.

⁶⁵ Anderson, 34-46.

CHAPTER TWO NEAR EASTERN EXPERIENCE OF NATIONALISM

COMPETITION WITH THE WEST

The Near Eastern experience of nationalism was born in response to military, political and economic pressures from the West. Hourani notes that in response to that pressure Arabic philosophical and political thought went through two major trends, Europe as the model (1830-1870) and Europe as the threat (1870-1900).⁶⁶ In response to the threat posed by Europe roughly three overlapping ideologies developed in the Levant: Ottomanism/Pan-Islam (1856-1918), Arab nationalism (1914-1920), and, in Palestine, Palestinian nationalism (1918-1920).⁶⁷

The motive force to imitate the West was its success in such disparate fields as education, military, science and quality of life. In Hourani's words "the Arabic speaking peoples were drawn...into the new world-order which sprang from the technical and industrial revolutions."⁶⁸ Until the West surpassed the Ottomans, they were content to consider the *shar'ia* perfect and unchangeable. The unbroken military defeats throughout the 18th century and first half of the 19th century caused Ottoman statesmen to look to the West for reforms that would strengthen and defend the Empire as well as their positions of power. But, as increased numbers of students studied in the West, the defensive needs of the Empire lost their urgency. The next generation of Ottoman

⁶⁶ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, vi.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1.

⁶⁸ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, iv.

Westernizers, such as Tahtawi and tanzimat reformers like Reshid, Ali and Fuad, began to desire progress for its own sake.⁶⁹

In the face of Western superiority Tahtawi and the Ottoman tanzimat reformers saw patriotism as a useful element of Western civilization that could be profitably and safely adopted.⁷⁰ At the same time they remained, and remain, disdainful of the fundamental requirements of enlightenment thought. Despite their realization that the West had greatly surpassed the Ottoman Muslims, even the reformers believed Islam and the Ottoman way of life was sound. They were confident that they could adopt only that which did not contradict the *shar'ia*, since Islam and Near Eastern culture were assumed far superior to Christianity and the culture of the West.⁷¹ This attitude is mirrored today among Kuwaiti intellectuals who believe that simple technology is the only cause of Western superiority and that all they need do is to purchase the same technology. Dawn argues that the Islamic claims against Christianity were not just religious bigotry and fanaticism, but a defense against a Western civilization perceived to be superior. He notes that even Christian Arabs took glory in Islam's past greatness.⁷² Hourani notes that in modern times the Arab collective consciousness had moved from pan-Islam through pan-Arabism to nationalism (*qawmiyya*), and shifted the basis of identity from religion to language.⁷³

⁶⁹ Dawn, 126.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁷¹ Ibid., 126-7.

⁷² Ibid., 146.

⁷³ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 373.

These shifts in identity were Eastern attempts to remain competitive before the liberal secularism of nineteenth-century England and France and the Islamic "reformism" of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida.⁷⁴

WESTERN SECULAR LIBERALISM

The first phase in this competitive environment was to model some aspects of the secular liberalism of Europe. Bernard Lewis explains that this was not their first opportunity. He writes that the introduction of nationalism to the Near East can be traced with great precision to the ideas that emanated from the French Revolution. Although, such seminal intellectual movements as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution were dismissed as "Christian" and allowed to pass unnoticed and without effect, the French Revolution was the first movement of ideas that had significant impact in the Near East.⁷⁵ Muslim Turks and Arabs, in contact with the West, brought back new ideas of fatherland and nation. By the middle of the 19th century there appeared Arabic and Turkish terms for these ideas.⁷⁶ Despite the new terms, the Arabs and Turks did not go much beyond the surface of European nationalism.

⁷⁴ Ibid., *Arabic Thought*, 343-4.

⁷⁵ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 316-7.

⁷⁶ Bernard Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey," *Journal of World History* I (July 1953): 107-108, quoted by C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 123.

They still believed in the traditional Islamic dynastic state and their adaptation of familiar words to the new terminology kept them close to the original definitions.⁷⁷

Patriotism and Nationalism

The concepts of patriotism and nationalism as the basis for political identity and state formation arrived in two stages. Patriotism consisted of more than the political and military duty owed one's country. It also entailed the unification of the country into a single national allegiance and transferred sovereignty to the people and away from the Church or State.⁷⁸ Patriotism, which assigned political significance to the extant love of one's place of birth, was a new idea to Muslims.⁷⁹ This is not to say that patriotism was unknown. The Arabs, Persians and Turks have always been proud of their heritage: their language, literature, history and culture. But this pride had limited political application. Before the arrival of the Western ideas of patriotism and nationalism, there was no concept of the nation as a unit of political identity. For Muslims, their identity was Islam, and they owed fealty to the political ruler who represented the Faith.⁸⁰ Man has always possessed a sense of loyalty to his community or group (literal *nationalism*), therefore, the central question of nationalism is how did this identity acquire political significance?

An Egyptian, Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi, was influential in the introduction of patriotism to the Near East. The publication in 1834 of the journal that described his

⁷⁷ Dawn, 124.

⁷⁸ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 328.

⁷⁹ Dawn, 123.

⁸⁰ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 327-8.

experiences in France, from 1826 to 1831, was widely read among Arabs and Turks. It warranted a Turkish translation in 1840 and a second Arabic edition in 1848.⁸¹ Al-Tahtawi embraced the idea that a nation was bound to a specific country and he argued that Egyptians were separate people that owed allegiance to their common fatherland.⁸² Though patriotism worked well for even the heterogeneous countries of Western Europe such as Spain and Belgium, it appealed less to the countries of the Near East. The ethnic model of nationalism that followed, around mid-century, was more compatible. As Bernard Lewis writes, "In countries of still uncertain territorial definition and of shifting national identity, ethnic nationalism was much more understandable than patriotism."⁸³ The idea of a nation defined not by country and status, but by religion, language, culture and presumed common descent was better received.⁸⁴ For Muslims the nation refers to "the *umma*, the community determined by religious belief, i.e. the nation of believers."⁸⁵

Perception of Inferiority

By the end of the 19th century the disparity between East and West was even worse and Europe, as a model, was rejected. More students were abroad or in attendance at Western missionary schools, the upper classes openly adopted Western dress and manners and the East was painfully cognizant of the West's contempt. The attitude of

⁸¹ Dawn, 123.

⁸² Ibid., 124.

⁸³ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 371.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 329.

⁸⁵ Vatikiotis, 36.

Lord Cromer that “reformed Islam is Islam no longer,” was typical of Western Arabists.⁸⁶ Edward Said writes of such attitudes, “It is therefore correct that every [19th century] European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.”⁸⁷ The result was an explosion of literature written to contradict the perceived inferiority of Islam and the East. After 1860 there was an increase in the number of newspapers and books devoted to attacks on Christianity and the justification of Islam.⁸⁸

Rise of Ottomanism

Dawn describes the two camps that emerged to defend the Ottoman Empire as conservatives and modernists. These Ottoman conservatives and modernists shared a common religious bigotry and agreed that Islam and the East were inherently superior to Christianity and the West. The Ottoman conservatives denied any Western superiority and defended the Eastern civilization that provided “true happiness, culture and morality to man.”⁸⁹ Only the Ottoman modernists, and later the Arab modernists, were able to admit their material inferiority or that Islam was in a deplorable state. This they ascribed to a deviation from true Islam⁹⁰ and caused by external corruption. The modernists held that only an Islam restored to its “pristine purity” could adopt necessary elements of

⁸⁶ Dawn, 128.

⁸⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 204.

⁸⁸ Dawn, 129.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 140.

modern civilization, such as patriotism and fatherland, and regain its former greatness.⁹¹

Despite their differences, both the Ottoman conservatives and Ottoman modernists were adherents to the political theories of pan-Islam.

PAN-ISLAM

For the pan-Islamic movement, unity and a restored Islamic life require religion to be the basis of political identity. The poet-philosopher Iqbal writes:

“The law of Islam does not recognize the apparent differences of race, nor the historical differences of nationality. The political ideal of Islam consists in the creation of a people born of a free fusion of all races and nationalities... The inner cohesion of such a nation would consist not in ethnic or geographic unity, not in the unity of language or social tradition, but in the unity of the religious and political ideal; or in the psychological fact of ‘like-mindedness.’”⁹²

The roots of the pan-Islamic movement can be traced to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II in the end of the last century. The goal of the movement was to safeguard the Muslim world from the dominant Western threat by means of a reconstructed Islamic unity and the restoration of an Islamic mode of life.⁹³ By the 1870’s Jamal al-Din al-Asadabadi (1838-1897), known in Europe, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire as al-Afghani, was a vocal advocate of a restored Islam. Al-Afghani argued that this pristine Islam required followers to exercise reason and examine the bases of their

⁹¹ Ibid., 131.

⁹² Kramer, 10-11.

⁹³ Basheer Nafi, “Palestine at the End of the Ottoman Era: Age of Political Breakup,” *Muslim World* 84.3-4 (1994): 317.

faith. He thought that European progress was the result of the appearance of Protestantism⁹⁴ but that, like the Christian Church, Islam could cease to be obscurantist.

“Every time that religion has the upper hand it will eliminate philosophy; and the contrary happens when philosophy rules as a sovereign mistress. So long as humanity exists, the struggle between dogma and free inquiry, between religion and philosophy will not cease, a bitter struggle in which the victory will not, I fear, lie with free thought, because reason does not attract the masses, and its teachings are understood only by a few choice spirits, and also because science, however beautiful it is, does not wholly satisfy humanity, which is athirst for an ideal which it likes to place in obscure and distant regions which philosophers and men of science can neither discern nor explore.”⁹⁵

Al-Afghani believed that education and an adapted Islam would frustrate foreign domination and renew the political unity of all Muslim countries under a restored caliphate.⁹⁶

Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II (reigned 1876-1909) used pan-Islam to strengthen his political hold on the Ottoman Empire by prominent displays of himself as the caliph of Islam. ‘Abd al-Hamid established seminaries, restored numerous mosques and shrines and was meticulous in his public displays and rituals.⁹⁷ But, despite the ostentatious displays of religion, ‘Abd al-Hamid was not a benevolent dictator. He used spies disguised as missionaries to sow discord among families and tribes. He used assassination and internal exile to control potential rivals. For example, Husain ibn ‘Ali of the house of Bani Hashem was one such rival. Husain with his wife and three young sons, ‘Ali,

⁹⁴ Dawn, 131-2.

⁹⁵ Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, 11.

⁹⁶ Antonius, 69.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 71.

‘Abdullah and Faisal (future King of the Hejaz, Amir of Transjordan and King of Iraq) was compelled to spend some fifteen years as the Sultan’s “guest” in Constantinople.⁹⁸ One of the ‘Abd al-Hamid’s masterstrokes was the construction of the Hejaz Railway (1901-1908). The 800 mile rail line connected Damascus with the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina and met with great enthusiasm. One third of the three million pounds sterling cost came from private donations.⁹⁹ While the railroad garnered huge support and goodwill and offered the Sultan a strategic advantage in the region, it also greatly facilitated inter-Arab communications and the results would soon be apparent.

Islamic Reformism

The intellectual activity generated by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II led to what Hourani calls the Islamic ‘reformism’ of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida.¹⁰⁰ The Egyptian Muhammad ‘Abduh held that Islam’s superiority was reason and rational faculties and Europe’s progress was the result of their adoption of Islamic precepts without recognition of Muhammed’s mission. ‘Abduh argued that the decline of Muslim civilization was the result of Islam’s perversion by the entanglement of science and religion. Thus, the weakness of the East began when Muslims ceased to exercise reason.¹⁰¹ ‘Abduh rejected all Western influences and argued that only a religious revival would restore political greatness to the Ottoman state. His opposition to any

⁹⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 344.

¹⁰¹ Dawn, 133.

nascent nationalism was clear in 1887, "If anyone believes that the name of the fatherland, the interest of the country and other such resounding words can take the place of religion in raising ambitions and pressing on their realization, then he has strayed onto an evil path."¹⁰² There is some irony that despite 'Abduh's support for the Ottoman Empire, his contention, that Islam's restoration demanded reverence for the Qur'an and required an attendant revival of literary and religious studies of classical Arabic,¹⁰³ sketched the outline of a Muslim theory of Arab nationalism.

Ottoman Modernists become Arab Modernists

'Abduh's pupil, Muhammed Rashid Rida, advanced his call for a revival of Arabic studies. "It is necessary to spread the Arabic language rather than Turkish since it [Arabic] is the language of religion, and so its revivification is the revivification of it [religion] and its [Arabic] spreading is the means of spreading it [religion] and its [Arabic's] spreading is the means of spreading it [religion] and of understanding it."¹⁰⁴ From 'Abduh's glorification of the Arabic language Rashid Rida found it a short leap to the glorification of Arabs. "The greatest glory for the Muslim conquests belongs to the Arabs and...the religion grew and became great because of them."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Dawn, 135.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 135-6.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-Manar* I, 764-771, 788-793 quoted by C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 137.

¹⁰⁵ Dawn, 137.

'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (born 1849), was an Aleppo Muslim of Kurdish origin, who continued the trend of 'Abduh and Rida by the addition of political theory. Along with Muhammad Rashid Rida, Al-Kawakibi openly challenged 'Abd al-Hamid's failure to enforce the *shar'ia*. He called for administrative autonomy within the Ottoman state and the establishment of an Arab "Caliphate" in Mecca to assist the reformation of Islam and the creation of a pan-Islamic Federation.¹⁰⁶ Al-Kawakibi called for the caliphate to be restored to an Arab of the tribe of Quraysh who should wield religious authority for all Muslims and temporal authority in the Hijaz.¹⁰⁷ To advance such a caliphate al-Kawakibi anonymously wrote the *Umm al-Qura* (one of the Qur'anic names for Mecca), a fictitious account of twenty-two Islamic scholars engaged in a witty and learned conference on the restoration of an Islamic society.¹⁰⁸

Historical Impotence

Before W.W.I. these schisms within the Ottoman Empire were not apparent and the inner cohesion of pan-Islam was considered able to mobilize the entire Islamic world. The claims of pan-Islamists such as Indian scholar Abu'l-Kalam Azad seemed entirely credible, "The entire Islamic world is, so to say, connected by an electric wire. The hand of the great Sultan of Turkey rests on its button. The least pressure on the button can disturb the whole Islamic world."¹⁰⁹ But the somnolent reaction of Muslims in India,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁷ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 52-3.

¹⁰⁸ Antonius, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Kramer, 12.

Central Asia, Egypt and North Africa to desperate appeals by the "Great Sultan" destroyed the credibility of pan-Islamic power.¹¹⁰ By calls for pan-Islamic support the Ottoman war effort vainly attempted to appeal to Arabs' sense of loyalty. The effort was ineffective on Arabs deeply disillusioned with Istanbul and ready for open revolt against their Turkish Muslim overlords.¹¹¹ With the Arab Revolt (1916) the Muslim people rejected the pan-Islam of the Ottoman empire and found solace in the narrow nationalism of Arabism and Turkism. A British Foreign Officer wrote in 1928 that, "All our information goes to show that the present tendency in Moslem countries is towards mere nationalism, usually with an anti-European complexion, and that, apart from this political ferment, there is no real Islamic revival." The British High Commissioner to Egypt in 1931 would write, "It is rather doubtful how far pan-Islamism, as distinct from pan-Arabianism, is even theoretically significant today."¹¹²

ARAB NATIONALISM

The political theory of Arab nationalism (pan-Arabianism) evolved from the pan-Islamic modernist diagnosis of Muslim decline and their prescription for revival. Ironically, the restoration to primacy of the Qur'an, and with it the Arabic language, assisted the shift from religion as the basis for political identity to ethnicity and language. The effect was to reverse the formula Iqbal offered of political Islam. Now, the inner cohesion of such a nation *would* consist in ethnic or geographic unity, in the unity of

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹¹¹ Nafi, 331.

¹¹² Kramer, 12-13.

language or social tradition, and *not* in the unity of the religious and political ideal.¹¹³

(Paraphrased with italics added)

Terminology

In his 1957 book *On Arab Nationalism*, Abd al-Latif Sharara describes the Arabic terminology of nationalism in precisely the secular terms above. The fatherland (*watan*) "is the soil and the climate in which live a group of people." The people (*sha'b*) "is that group of men who live in one land, who have the same historical origin, and have the same political order." The state (*daula*) "is that political organization which a people set up in a fatherland." The nation (*umma*) "is a wider conception than the state, greater than the people, and more meaningful than the fatherland." A nation need not be tied to a single state, fatherland or people "but it must have its own language, its own history, its own ideals, its own shared aspirations, its own shared memories, and its own particular natural links which bind its members in two respects, the moral and the economic." Nationalism (*qaumiyya*) "is that emotion and common interest, combined in one feeling and one idea within the members of the nation."¹¹⁴ To see how this secular nationalism evolved, we will review the experiences of Ibrahim Pasha, the Syrian Christian Arabs and the Arab reaction to the rise of the Young Turks.

¹¹³ Ibid., 10-11.

¹¹⁴ Abd al-Latif Sharara, "The Idea of Nationalism," in *Arab Nationalism: an Anthology*, trans. Sylvia G. Haim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 227-8.

Ibrahim Pasha

One of the earliest examples of an Arab nationalist is Ibrahim Pasha, Commander-in-Chief of his father Mehemed Ali's army. Ibrahim Pasha saw the political value Arab nationalism offered in their conflict with the Ottoman Sultan. He told the French envoy, the Baron de Boislecomte, that he wished to infuse the Arabs with patriotism and Arab nationalism.¹¹⁵

In 1834, Ibrahim Pasha, as military governor, began a series of reforms in Palestine. He relaxed controls on foreign missionary activities and the Jesuits and Protestants increased their missions. Printing presses arrived from Malta and a literary club reinvigorated the Arabic language. It would later prove a short trip to political activism.¹¹⁶ Ibrahim Pasha began a state controlled primary education system. It was similar to the Egyptian system, inaugurated by his father, that deliberately attempted to awaken (the presumed pre-existing) Arab national consciousness.¹¹⁷ But despite his reforms, resistance to Ibrahim Pasha's internal resource mobilization efforts such as taxes, conscription and a failed disarmament program, led to open revolts in Syria¹¹⁸ that took over a year to suppress.¹¹⁹ Ibrahim Pasha was never able to foment the nationalism that he intended.

¹¹⁵ Antonius, 29.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 37-9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

¹¹⁹ Asad J. Rustum, ed., *The Royal Archives of Egypt and the Disturbances in Palestine, 1834* (Beirut: The American Press, 1938), quoted in Khalid Fahmy's *All the Pasha's Men* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 249.

George Antonius writes that Britain's opposition, over concerns about potential Indian trade disruption, and the total lack of any Arab nationalism are the reasons independent Arab countries failed to emerge from Ottoman suzerainty in 1840.¹²⁰ This is not to say that the Arab world lacked the basis for a common identity. Christians, Muslims, Druze, Nusairi and Mutawali, had much in common, "language, customs, racial kinship, and, above all, hatred of Turkish rule...but in their aspiration towards freedom they were moved by different impulses; and their motives...were selfish and divergent."¹²¹ This inability to coordinate their anti-Turkish efforts is the real reason for their impotence. When Ibrahim abolished the laws of exception against Christians, it only earned him the enmity of the Arabs. "Because the age was fanatical and knew nothing of patriotism, the strongest sentiment it evoked was that of jealousy."¹²²

Syrian Christian Arabs

Syrian Christian Arabs were the next to advance a quasi-secular Arab nationalism. It would redefine "Arab" from its religious identity to one of language, social habits and history. Because the Syrian Christian Arabs played an essential role in the establishment of a national Arab psyche, Haim calls Arab nationalism "a secular ideology, largely formulated by Christians, with Islam,"¹²³

¹²⁰ Antonius, 32.

¹²¹ Ibid., 33.

¹²² Ibid., 33.

¹²³ Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, ix.

Restoration of Classical Arabic

The way the Christians created a national psyche was initially through language. As we noted earlier, Dr. John Bowring, Palmerston's envoy, reported in 1838, that there were neither booksellers in Damascus nor Aleppo, nor Arabic newspapers nor periodicals available.¹²⁴ Indeed, regional dialects had overtaken the classical Arabic language.¹²⁵ It took the American Christian missionaries, who learned, then taught Classical Arabic, to restore it to its "place of pride."¹²⁶

A key intellectual in the restoration of Classical Arabic was Nasif Yazeji (1800-1871). A Lebanese Christian scholar, Yazeji's interest in the classics and his expertise in Arabic grammar, logic and rhetoric attracted a large circle of disciples. These men would absorb and transmit this common Arab (linguistic) heritage.¹²⁷ Butrus Bustani (1819-1883), was another key intellectual in the restoration of Classical Arabic. A Lebanese Christian scholar, Bustani mastered Arabic, Syriac, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Italian and French. He translated the Bible, compiled an Arabic dictionary (*Muhit al-Muhit*), and wrote an Arabic encyclopedia (*Dairat al-Ma'aref*).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Antonius, 38.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 49.

Political Societies

The move from literary scholars to politics was next. Bustani published the first political journal in Syria from Beirut called the "Clarion of Syria" (*Nafir Suriya*). He sought to ease religious intolerance following the massacres of Christians in Damascus and Lebanon in 1860. In 1863 Bustani founded the acclaimed National School (*Al-Madrasa al-Wataniya*) to encourage religious tolerance and patriotic ideals, and where Nasif Yazeji taught Arabic.¹²⁹ In 1870, Bustani founded the fortnightly political and literary review *Al-Jenan*. Bustani emblazoned the masthead with the novel idea, "Patriotism is an article of faith."¹³⁰ Bustani, Yazeji and American missionaries and scholars founded the first political society in the Near East. The Society of Arts and Sciences was established in 1847 in Beirut and was the first and archetype for an explosion of societies.¹³¹

In 1856 (post Crimean War) the Sultan granted equality in taxation and the administration of justice to all religious creeds with the *Hatti Humayun* reforms. These tanzimat reforms were essential to the emergence of the Syrian Scientific Society that was formed within a year of their passage.¹³² The Syrian Scientific Society (*Al-Jam'iya al-'Ilmiya al-Syriya*) was formed in 1857 by Druze, Muslim and Christian members who claimed national progress as their incentive and Arab pride as their common bond. This

¹²⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 50.

¹³¹ Ibid., 52.

¹³² Ibid., 57.

was the first time in Syria and the first time in 350 years of Ottoman domination that a common bond was established across religious divisions. This was the first manifestation of a collective secular national consciousness and the cradle of a new political movement.¹³³

Massacres of 1860

The feudal and sectarian upheavals of 1860 energized the drive to improve education and dismantle obscurantism and encouraged a new group of intellectuals to agitate for the liberation of their country from Turkish rule.¹³⁴ Ibrahim Yazeji, son of Nasif, strengthened ethnic claims and argued that the Arab decline was the result of Turkish domination. The Turks had "reduced learning to the religious sciences and religion to bigotry and fanaticism."¹³⁵ In 1863 Ibrahim Yazeji anonymously published a famous poem of sedition and Arab insurgence that was widely memorized and disseminated.¹³⁶ In 1875 anonymous placards appeared in Beirut, Damascus, Tripoli and Sidon that demanded independence for Syria, union with Lebanon, Arabic declared the official language, the removal of censorship and the establishment of free expression. The placards demanded that local conscripts be kept for local service, a reaction against Arab service in Ottoman military adventures as far away as Yemen in 1872 and the Russo-

¹³³ Ibid., 53-4.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹³⁵ Dawn, 132.

¹³⁶ Antonius, 55.

Turkish front in 1874. Each of the placards quoted a verse from Ibrahim Yazeji's famous poem of twelve years earlier.¹³⁷

Western Style Education

Eventually, the Western style education that played such a significant role in the creation of the Arab national movement, by restoration of the classical Arabic language, reached a point of diminishing returns. These Western style education systems now harmed the nationalist movement. It exacerbated sectarian differences and allowed the political penetration and acquisition of political power by clergy. Western language education effectively transferred control of the nationalist movement from Christian to Muslim hands as foreign language skills came at the expense of essential Arabic mastery.¹³⁸ Muslims who feared the Western schools would proselytize their children stayed with the lesser quality public schools. This maintained their strict Arab ties while the Western curriculum of the English and French schools weakened the Arab ties of the Christian Arabs.¹³⁹

Despite the potential of Arab nationalism, the appeal of secular nationalism remained largely confined to Syrian and Lebanese Christians since Muslims rejected an Arabism without Islam.¹⁴⁰ The Syrian Muslims viewed Christian Arab nationalism as simply an attempt to expand the political power of non-Muslims and embraced 'Abd al-

¹³⁷ Ibid., 84.

¹³⁸ Antonius, 93.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 94.

¹⁴⁰ Dawn, 140.

Hamid's pan-Islamism instead.¹⁴¹ They rejected Christian Arabism with slogans such as, "Arabic shall not be christianized"¹⁴² or "combat Europe with its own weapon"¹⁴³ and remained firmly in the Ottoman camp as conservatives or modernists till 1914.

Reaction to Young Turks

Arab loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan had, for some four centuries, rested on their common sense of membership in the Islamic nation (umma). Arab Muslims had continuously rejected, for the last forty odd years, the calls of secular Arab nationalism. But the emergence of Turkish nationalism and the Young Turks' imposition of the Turkish language and customs on the Arabs caused Arab Muslims to suddenly question their loyalty to the "Islamic Ottomans" on racial and linguistic grounds.¹⁴⁴ As the Young Turks Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) consolidated its power in Istanbul, the local Arab Muslim elite found themselves deprived of economic and political positions of power.¹⁴⁵ Concern for their own lost positions, more than any European influence of patriotism or nationalism, led the Arab elite to embrace an ideology that would justify their return to power.¹⁴⁶ It was the desire for power that animated Muslim acceptance of

¹⁴¹ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 53.

¹⁴² Dawn, 133.

¹⁴³ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 53.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁴⁵ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 60.

Arab nationalism, an ideology that allowed the local Arab elite within the Ottoman Arabic provinces to argue that Turks should not rule Arabs.¹⁴⁷

The Cure Weakens the Patient

The pan-Islam and the Arab nationalism that were meant to strengthen and defend the Ottoman Empire did just the opposite. Their mistake was to assume that patriotism and nationalism, considered a source of Western strength and progress, were as adaptable as any administrative or military technique. This assumption led to the development of Islamic Ottomanism and regional manifestations of Arab nationalism, to defend the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic East from the Christian West.¹⁴⁸ The ideologies of Ottomanism and Arabism formed in defense of the East began to give political significance to nationality in an area where religion and dynasty had historically determined political power and defined the state.¹⁴⁹ Ottomanists attempted to use religion to unify a "nation" from a multi-ethnic empire and Arabists attempted to elevate Arabs in importance to reestablish a pristine Islam. "Arabism developed from modernist Ottomanism and, like modernist and conservative Ottomanism, was a reaction against the failure of the Ottoman civilization to keep pace with Europe."¹⁵⁰ Both attempts were designed to defend the East and preserve or enhance their own political power. But the new ideas of patriotism and nationalism undermined the foundations of the multi-national

¹⁴⁷ Dawn, 123.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 145.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵⁰ Dawn, 147.

Ottoman Empire by superseding religion as the basis for political legitimacy and allegiance.¹⁵¹

Arab Nationalism: Ascendancy and Decline

After the Ottoman defeat in 1918 there was a marked shift among Arab Muslim political leaders and lay intellectuals away from Islam as the basis of their common identity and political loyalty. Instead, they began to embrace a racial and linguistic Arab identity suddenly imbued with political significance.¹⁵² Arab nationalism became a “pride of race.”¹⁵³ Arab nationalism, like pan-Islam before it, seemed to offer a wider constituency and increased power. It began in earnest as a defensive reaction to Istanbul’s “Turkification” policies¹⁵⁴ and was briefly resumed when “Arab disunity” was blamed for Israel’s continued survival.¹⁵⁵ Arab nationalism reached its zenith with the voluntary association of the United Arab Republic, formed by the merger of Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961.¹⁵⁶ The pride of race for Arab nationalists was briefly challenged by the emergence of separate national identities among those who began to invent ties to various ancient predecessors. The Phoenicians were adopted by the Maronites and the ancient

¹⁵¹ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 320.

¹⁵² Dawn, 122.

¹⁵³ Antonius, 13.

¹⁵⁴ Nafi, 317.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 374-5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 361.

Aramaic culture was claimed by some Syrians.¹⁵⁷ Arab nationalists denounced these ties with pejorative phrases such as “Egyptian Pharaonism” then effectively appropriated these claims by the “retroactive posthumous naturalization” of all the ancient Semitic peoples, except Israel, as Arabs. This extended their “history” by millennia, appropriated the achievements of all the ancient Semitic peoples and post-dated the Arab claim to Palestine, before Israel’s, as reborn Cannanites.¹⁵⁸ Despite its rediscovered “historical” roots, Arab nationalism weakened as states solidified their independence and territorial integrity. Although, Israel’s current prime minister may well resurrect it since “Netanyahu has done more to unify the Arab states than anyone since Nasser.”¹⁵⁹ Today, Arab nationalism is less a process of unification than an abandoned ideology. But its empty rhetoric and singular aim, the destruction of the State of Israel, remain the third rail of Arabic politics, “Touch it and you die,” for any Arab leader, political party, or group.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ “Nations...are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures.” Gellner, 48-9.

¹⁵⁸ Bernard Lewis, *History-Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 36.

¹⁵⁹ Bernard Lewis, Personal interview. 5 May 1997.

¹⁶⁰ Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, ix.

CHAPTER THREE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY -

PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

With the description of the current state of Arab nationalism we close our review of the Near Eastern experience with nationalism. Now we will focus on Palestine proper, acknowledged by many to be the most complex problem in the region.¹⁶¹ There are three ideologies that compete for loyalty and define political identity in Palestine: the ethnic Arab nationalism, the geographic Palestinian nationalism, and the religious pan-Islam.¹⁶² All three have dominated Palestinian politics since its emergence as a territory in the 1920's.¹⁶³ We will discuss the origins of Palestinian nationalism in Arab nationalism and Zionism, the example of regional nationalist revolts, and the movement's political development.

Roots in Arab Nationalism

It comes as no surprise that the roots of Palestinian nationalism are found in Arab nationalism. This was the social and political world in which it formed. The Palestinian manifestations of Arab nationalism are fairly limited. Few Palestinian Arabs appear to have embraced Arab nationalism based on the failure of Palestinians to rise up against the Turks and the dearth of Arab nationalists societies in Palestine. Although, authors like

¹⁶¹ Harff, 220.

¹⁶² Ibid., 250.

¹⁶³ Nafi, 317.

Muhammad Y. Muslih reject this interpretation.¹⁶⁴ Instead, Muslih contends that the fragmentation, into provincial lines, of the Arab nationalist groups in Faysal's Damascus government, (1918 to 1920), greatly encouraged Palestinian nationalism.¹⁶⁵

Reaction to Zionism

A more powerful impulse to Palestinian nationalism came with the burgeoning Zionist immigration that, concurrent with the rise of Arabism, gave impetus to a defensive form of local Palestinian nationalism.¹⁶⁶ "The common experience of Zionist settlement and conquest is what has created a Palestinian nationalism associated with a territory which, until 1918, did not even have any significant regional identity within southern Syria, to which it belonged."¹⁶⁷ One of the specific failures of Arab nationalism for the Palestinians was its inability to effectively protect Palestine from the Zionist immigration. The Syrians in Faysal's government made no secret of their dislike for the Palestinians and even called them strangers (*ghuraba*). It was obvious that Faysal and the Syrian Arab nationalists would place the cause of Palestine second to the cause of Syria.¹⁶⁸ So the Palestinian pan-Arabists made peace with the new "national" situation.

¹⁶⁴ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 96-100.

¹⁶⁵ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, x.

¹⁶⁶ Nafi, 317.

¹⁶⁷ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 138.

¹⁶⁸ Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 153.

"Ethnoculturally, the Palestinian pan-Arabists did not break with Arab nationalism, but organizationally and politically they accepted the paramountcy of *raison de la nation*."¹⁶⁹

Regional Examples

If Syria was a disappointment, the Palestinians did not have to look far to find regional events that encouraged them in their desire for a state. The emergence of the Turkish republic at the end of W.W.I. and the accomplishments of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk, 1881-1938) had a profound effect on nationalist movements in the Arab world.¹⁷⁰ It was the first successful nationalist revolution and offered the Muslim people new hope for a way to defy and defeat their imperial rulers.¹⁷¹ There were other examples as well. There were nationalist revolts in Iraq (1920) and Syria (1925).¹⁷² The British installed Arab governments in Transjordan and Iraq. The independent Arab states of Yemen and Saudi Arabia were formed¹⁷³ and, twenty years later, complete independence was won by Syria and Lebanon with the French and British withdrawals of 1945.¹⁷⁴ All of these events made a Palestinian state seem appropriate and inevitable.

¹⁶⁹ Muhammad Muslih, "The Rise of Local Nationalism in the Arab East," *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* ed. R. Khalidi, L. Anderson, M. Muslih, and R. Simon. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 181.

¹⁷⁰ Albert Habib Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 319.

¹⁷¹ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the Arab World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976), 346.

¹⁷² Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 318.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 318-9.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 356-7.

Inevitable though it seemed, the early successes of the Turkish republic contrasted sharply with the failure of the Palestinian people to secure a territorial base in the 1920's. Barbara Harff finds a number of factors for this failure. She writes that some of the factors were external: the Jewish Diaspora, the intervention of the colonial powers, and later the superpowers. But some of the factors were internal: a lack of unified Palestinian leadership, and the presence of class and religious divisions all contributed to their failure.¹⁷⁵

Political Development

The lack of a unified leadership is a critical factor that we will examine in the political development of Palestinian nationalism. In this section we will discuss the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the *intifada*, exiled versus local leadership and the Palestinian National Authority. Gamal Abdul Nasser initiated the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at the Arab League summit conference in 1964¹⁷⁶ but kept them in tight control, subordinating the interests of Palestinians to those of Arab nationalists. From 1949 till 1967 the Arab League, particularly the Arab states that occupied parts of Palestine, blocked Palestinian nationalist movements and denied the Palestinians participation in any political process. This was reversed following Israel's decisive defeat of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria during the 1967 War, and the three years old Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), moribund and impotent, gained new

¹⁷⁵ Harff, 221.

¹⁷⁶ Cheryl Rubenberg, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: Its Institutional Infrastructure* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute of Arab Studies, Inc., 1983), 5.

importance¹⁷⁷ as it was taken over by the *fedayeen* guerrillas.¹⁷⁸ In February 1969, Yasser Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO executive committee by the fifth Palestinian National Council (PNC). On 6 May 1970, all Palestinian organizations signed a unity agreement recognizing the PLO and the umbrella structure of national unity.¹⁷⁹ The PLO has been an anomaly in the pan-Arab movement from the start. "Their affiliation to the Arab 'nation' is uncontested," writes Sylvia Haim, "but their *raison d'être* has been their claim to being a distinct people with a particular land to which they have an inalienable and legitimate right."¹⁸⁰ This focus on the land is one of the unique characteristics of Palestinian nationalism. It is the source of voluminous literature that seeks to answer the often asked question of why the Palestinians, being Arabs, have simply not assimilated with one or another Arab group?¹⁸¹ Indeed, for thirty years, the Palestinians, under PLO leadership, have built their national identity on the recovery of sovereignty over a shared land.

¹⁷⁷ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 365.

¹⁷⁸ Jillian Becker, *The PLO: the Rise and Fall of the Palestine Liberation Organization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 4, 68-9.

¹⁷⁹ Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1988), 11.

¹⁸⁰ Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, viii.

¹⁸¹ Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 95-8.

Intifada

Despite the PLO's new autonomy it took more than twenty years and the spontaneous *intifada* to demonstrate a Palestinian national will that the Israelis' long denied existed. Galia Golan, Department of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, notes that the *intifada* had great impact on the Israelis' perception of the costs of occupation.¹⁸² Theodor Herzl's prescient diary entry, following the First Zionist Congress in August 1897, now appeared valid for Palestinians as well: "The state is created mainly upon the people's will for a state."¹⁸³ The *intifada*, Arabic for "the shaking off," began on 8 December 1987. It was a spontaneous uprising within Gaza's *Jabalya* refugee camp that rapidly swept the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, all without PLO leadership or initiative.¹⁸⁴ The United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) communiqués issued during the first two years of the *intifada* made considerable progress toward codifying the socio-political values of identity, legitimacy and participation. Despite the Israeli occupation that deprives the Palestinians control of their land, economic resources, infrastructure and judicial system.¹⁸⁵ The UNLU, comprised of pro-PLO groups, Fateh, the PFLP, the DFLP and the Communist Party coordinated with the

¹⁸² Andrew Clarke, "Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism at the End of the Twentieth Century," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 2.4 (1993): 6.

¹⁸³ Safran, 20.

¹⁸⁴ Sara M. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: the Political Economy of De-Development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 292.

¹⁸⁵ Urban, 81.

Islamic Jihad and enjoyed mass support.¹⁸⁶ The UNLU communiqués echoed PLO demands for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. The participating militant Islamists simply rejected that as an ultimate political goal.¹⁸⁷ One year after the start of the *intifada* Arafat, to regain the initiative, announced the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to exist, adoption of a two state solution and their acceptance of UN Resolutions 242¹⁸⁸ and 338.¹⁸⁹ ¹⁹⁰ "Neither Arafat nor the PLO would have undertaken a political step of such magnitude without popular pressures from Gaza and the West Bank."¹⁹¹

Exiled vs Local Leadership

As demonstrated by the UNLU communiqués, there was a struggle between the PLO leadership in Tunis and those in the occupied territories over the political values of identity, legitimacy and participation. "I have worked for my people and, like many others, I have spent several years in Israeli prisons because of this. Yet the day Palestine becomes a state, I will leave, and I will tell you why: I have more freedom now, under the

¹⁸⁶ Jamal R. Nassar, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: From Armed Struggle to the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 193.

¹⁸⁷ Jean-Francois Legrain, "HAMAS: Legitimate Heir of Palestinian Nationalism?" in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* ed. John L. Esposito. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1997), 164.

¹⁸⁸ UN Resolution 242, adopted 22 November 1967, called for the Israeli withdrawal of territory seized during the 1967 War.

¹⁸⁹ UN Resolution 338, adopted 22 October 1973, called for a cease-fire and the implementation of UN Resolution 242.

¹⁹⁰ Harff, 222.

¹⁹¹ Roy, 292.

Israelis, than I will have under the PLO and Fatah.”¹⁹² The PLO abroad had no desire to see a leadership emerge in the territories that could organize the struggle. Only the Palestinian Communist Party was sufficiently organized and Fatah damaged it by “precipitating a split in the trade union movement and directing PLO financial aid to ‘reliable people.’”¹⁹³ When financial inducements failed to control indigenous Palestinian leadership, terror always worked.¹⁹⁴

Palestinian National Authority

Today, Yassir Arafat has successfully held the Palestinian groups together long enough to see the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) following negotiations with the Israelis. Palestinian writers believe that the PNA “appears to be the surest path to full and recognized sovereignty over at least a portion of what they consider their original homeland,”¹⁹⁵ although, the PNA does not meet the demands of secular and Islamic rejectionists who seek Israel’s destruction. Treated as a quasi-government by the international community the PLO has come a long way from the weak group of “splintered organizations partly ruled by criminals,” as King Hussein of Jordan called them.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Urban, 68.

¹⁹³ Gresh, 222.

¹⁹⁴ Becker, 221.

¹⁹⁵ Harold M. Cubert, *The PFLP’s Changing Role in the Middle East* (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1997), 185.

¹⁹⁶ Becker, 5.

PAN-ISLAM RESURGENT

Since Arab nationalism is no longer a viable political movement, a resurgent and politically attractive pan-Islam has become the sole competitor to the PNA vision of secular nationalism. Islam is a "political religion" that competes with Palestinian nationalism whenever their political aims differ, though Arab writers deny the possibility.¹⁹⁷ To describe the resurgence of pan-Islam in Palestine, we will review the impact of the Iranian Islamic revolution, the Islamic movement in Palestine, the obstacles to their agenda, the Nationalists use of Islamic rhetoric and the West's reaction.

Iranian Islamic Revolution

Musa K. Budeiri writes that prior to the Iranian revolution Islamic movements remained in political ferment by combating indigenous nationalist and left-wing movements. Traditional and pro-Western governments like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and even Israel funded Islamic movements as a balance against radical Arab nationalists and left-wing movements.¹⁹⁸ But since the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution pan-Islamic ideas have enjoyed a revival. Many Muslims found inspiration in Ayatollah Khomeini's words,

"I hope that all Islamic nations, which have been set against one another and divided by the evil foreign propaganda against them, will wake up and join hands to form a great Islamic government under the banner of 'There is no God but

¹⁹⁷ Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, "Islam and Arab Nationalism," in *Arab Nationalism: an Anthology*, trans. Sylvia G. Haim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 174.

¹⁹⁸ Musa K. Budeiri, "The Nationalist Dimension," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24.3 (1995): 90.

Allah' and prove victorious the whole world over" (BBC/ME, February 27, 1979).¹⁹⁹

In many ways these Islamic movements remain a defense against Western ideas. Islamic scholars, such as Abu'l Ala al-Mawdudi of Pakistan's Islamic University (*Jamiat-i-Islami*), are unambiguous in their rejection of Western institutions. Islam is

"the very antithesis of secular, Western democracy. The philosophical foundation of Western democracy is the sovereignty of the people. Lawmaking is their prerogative and legislation must correspond to the mood and temper of their opinion....Islam...altogether repudiates the philosophy of popular sovereignty and rears its polity on the foundations of the sovereignty of God and the viceregency (khilafat) of man."²⁰⁰ Khumayni echoed the same sentiment, "One can distinguish between Islamic government and constitutional regimes, both monarchical and republican. In the latter, it is the representatives of the people or the king who legislate, whereas [in the former] the authority to legislate rests with God Almighty...no one can enforce that which God did not reveal" (Khumayni: 39, 41-2).²⁰¹

Pan-Islam in Palestinian Politics

Although, pan-Islam became an important social and political force in the Arab states by the end of the 1970s, the absence of a Palestinian state allowed the nationalist PLO to dominate the political scene as the "only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." This has radically changed in the ten years following the outbreak of the *intifada* as Islamism has become a major political force at the expense of the PLO.²⁰² The result is that today there are two opposing trends that enjoy broad support in Palestinian society, the Islamic and the nationalist. Neither can claim to be the sole voice of the Palestinian

¹⁹⁹ Kramer, 13.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 31.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 32.

²⁰² Legrain, 159.

people.²⁰³ To understand how Islamism became an ideological contestant in Palestine we will review its strongest proponents, the Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

The Islamic Jihad

The Islamic Jihad is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood Society²⁰⁴ whose founding principle is that the Palestinian cause is central to the Islamist cause. Established in the late 1970's by the Egyptian physician Fathi Shiqaqi and biologist Bashir Nafi, the Islamic Jihad argues that since re-Islamization is stymied by Zionism and Israeli occupation. It is, therefore, an immediate and individual Islamic duty (*fard al-ain*) for all Muslims to assist in the destruction of Israel.²⁰⁵ Although, nationalists organized the *intifada*, its impetus came from the Islamic Jihad's numerous armed operations in 1986-7 that linked Islam with patriotism (*wataniyyah*). Despite the success of the *intifada* the Islamic Jihad was never able to reconcile nationalism (*qawmiyyah*) and religion. By 1994 the Islamic Jihad enjoyed less than 5 percent public support.²⁰⁶ That reconciliation would fall to the Hamas.

The Hamas

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) was created by the more traditional Muslim Brotherhood in August 1988, to capitalize on the public sympathy garnered by

²⁰³ Abu-Amr, xvii.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., xvii.

²⁰⁵ Legrain, 161.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 161.

radical Islamic militants such as the Islamic Jihad.²⁰⁷ But Hamas quickly overshadowed the Muslim Brotherhood and developed into a religio-nationalist movement by offering an activist Islamic alternative to the secular nationalist movement (PLO).²⁰⁸ Legrain writes that Hamas has capitalized on a unique blend of patriotism (*wataniyyah*) and religion (*dawa*) strengthened by moral and financial prudence and military and political skill.²⁰⁹ Like other fundamentalist parties, for example, Turkey's Refah party and Orthodox Jews in Israel, Palestine's Hamas provides social services that the government cannot or will not provide. Not only does this provide legitimacy to the fundamentalists but, equally important, by control of education they gain influence over the nature and transmission of nationalism.²¹⁰ Today the Hamas, most popular in the economically depressed Gaza Strip,²¹¹ plays the obstructionist in the peace process. It accuses the PLO of entering into the Oslo Accords with Israel in a desperate attempt to stem the burgeoning Islamic opposition to their authority in Palestine. Mahmoud Zahhar, Hamas spokesman in Gaza, denounces the concept of secular nationalism as an idea offered by Western educated Christians as a substitute for Islam. "Democracy is nothing but an original form of dictatorship." Instead, the pan-Islamic activist looks across state

²⁰⁷ Budeiri, 91.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 92.

²⁰⁹ Legrain, 159.

²¹⁰ Bernard Lewis, Personal interview. 5 May 1997.

²¹¹ Harff, 246.

boundaries and forward to the destruction of Israel and the voluntary subsumption of all Arab states into one greater Islamic state.²¹²

Obstacles to Palestinian Pan-Islamists

Impeding the creation of that greater Islamic state are at least three obstacles: secular resistance, a fractured Islamic leadership, and the imperatives of the modern industrial state. The first obstacle to the creation of an Islamic society is the resistance offered by Palestinian secularists and non-Muslims. The goal of all Islamic groups is to create an Islamic society modeled on the first community of the prophet Muhammad and his companions. A precondition to such a society is an Islamic state that will resolve all current political, economic and social conflicts. An Islamist sees no distinction between religion and the state. The Qur'an and the *sunna* are sufficient for all aspects of life.²¹³ But the *sine qua non* conditions for Hamas' success in replacing the nationalist leader PLO is to merge their political and military policies and reconcile Islamism with nationalism.²¹⁴ Abu-Amr writes that such reconciliation requires the Islamists to prove the validity of their vision and the feasibility of their policies to deliver on the nationalist goals of the Palestinian people. It is no small feat to win acceptance for an Islamic

²¹² Hussein Hijazi, "Hamas: Waiting for Secular Nationalism to Self-Destruct," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24.3 (1995): 83-6. Text of an interview with Mahmud Zahhar, spokesman for the Hamas in Gaza, by Hijazi for the Institute of Palestine Studies in October-December 1994.

²¹³ Abu-Amr, xiv.

²¹⁴ Legrain, 160.

identity in the face of widespread Palestinian secularist tendencies reinforced by secular institutions, PLO factions, the intelligentsia and an active urban Christian minority.²¹⁵

Fractured Pan-Islamic Leadership

The second obstacle to the creation of an Islamic society is the splintered Hamas leadership. The older generation of Hamas, with their roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, presses the centrality of religion, however, many of the younger members have never held that principle²¹⁶ and are more politically motivated. Also there are geographical differences. For example, the Hamas leadership outside the territories joined the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to support Iraq during the Gulf War. At the same time, the Hamas leadership inside the territories remained silent, giving tacit support to Kuwait by calling for a vote on Kuwaiti self-determination. This is why the Gulf states continued to fund the Palestinian Islamic movement while cutting off the PLO²¹⁷ and Jordan.

Modern International System

The third obstacle to the establishment of a greater Islamic state is the structural realities of the modern international system. Despite the revival of the idea of a worldwide Islamic community *al-umma al-Islamiyya* combined with the concept of *din wa dawla* (the divine state order)²¹⁸ the abode of Islam is scattered across some forty states incorporated into the international system. The population of those states are

²¹⁵ Abu-Amr, 128.

²¹⁶ Legrain, 170.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 170-1.

²¹⁸ Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: a Critical Enquiry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 24.

diverse on every level sharing nothing save a belief in Islam. Cleveland agrees that Islam threatens to be "a factor of dispersion and divisiveness." He quotes the Arab nationalist Sati' al-Husri, "We must recognize before all else that we are living in an age which has, for a long time, separated political connections from religious ones."²¹⁹ Islam cannot offer a multi-national political identity in the modern era and there are those who argue it is illegitimate to try. One of 'Abduh's disciples, 'Alik 'Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966), wrote *Islam and the Bases of Political Authority (al-Islam wa usul al-hukm)*, to argue that the caliphate was not a divine political order and that the Prophet never created a state.

"In reality, the religion of Islam is innocent of that caliphate which Muslims have come to know ... It is not a religious institution, nor is the office of judge or any of the offices of state .. These are all purely political offices. Religion has nothing to do with them; it neither knows nor denies them, neither commands nor forbids them, it has left them to us, to consult in regard to them the principles of reason, the experience of nations, and the laws of statecraft."²²⁰

The issue is, at bottom, one of "cultural accommodation of social change."²²¹ "An Islamic cultural understanding of the nation-state and a corresponding new world view of Muslims is still lacking."²²² Nevertheless, certain Western analysts and governments, again, see the power of a monolithic pan-Islam as self-evident. The statement by an

²¹⁹ William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 150.

²²⁰ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 346-7.

²²¹ Tibi, 26.

²²² Ibid., 26.

American official, "Any fool can see the lethal potential in the aftermath of Iran,"²²³ is representative of Western assumptions. In 1993, a respected scholar of the modern Near East spoke of an armed Islam that could potentially "create a world order based not on American hegemony but on a restored balance of power--and terror."²²⁴ It all looks and sounds ferocious but revolutions almost never spread beyond their borders, despite all claims and fears to the contrary.²²⁵ It is not at all clear that the Iranian revolution was sufficient cause to reject six decades of accumulated wisdom. The structure of the international system, and the absence of any unifying authority, render pan-Islamic ideology impotent to create a greater Islamic state.²²⁶

Pan-Islamic Rhetoric Valuable

Despite the relative impotence of pan-Islam to reorganize the international state system, internally its rhetoric retains great value. The secular nationalist PLO chairman Yasir Arafat claimed pan-Islamic *bona fides* when he said of the Iranian revolution,

"The path we have chosen is identical; we are moving forward on the same path; we are fighting the same struggle, the same revolution; our nation is one.... We have always lived in the same trenches, for the same goal and the same slogan. Our slogan is: We are all Muslims; we are all Islamic revolutionaries, all fighting for the establishment of one body of Islamic believers. We shall continue our struggle against Zionism and move towards Palestine alongside the Iranian Islamic revolutionaries" (BBC/ME, February 21, 1979).²²⁷

²²³ Kramer, 14.

²²⁴ John Obert Voll, *Islam, Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 387.

²²⁵ Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 5.

²²⁶ Kramer, 39.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

So when Arafat insists that the PLO is committed to the creation of a "secular, democratic state," while at the same time enjoining Muslims to jihad for the "glorious Islamic nation," it is not readily apparent whose sentimental weakness is being exploited.²²⁸ Pan-Islamic rhetoric also provides more than domestic legitimacy. To project oneself as the leader of a wider constituency is to increase one's influence with friends and adversaries. Implicit in this rhetoric is the notion of a Muslim world poised to act in concert if only triggered by the speaker. It was not true of the Ottoman Sultan in 1918. There seems little reason to think it more valid today.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Following our look at nationalism and pan-Islam in Palestine, we will now review some of the problem areas, domestic, Islamic and regional, that have the potential to affect regional stability.

Domestic Problem Areas

The domestic problem areas we will examine include factional rigidity, problems of nation and state, and internal weakness within the Palestinian Authority. The factions of pan-Islam, Arabism and Palestinian nationalism were all born in response to shifts of power, loyalty and interests. Before their intellectual codification in language, history, culture and geography, each ideology could coexist with the others. But since the pan-Islamic writings of Rashid Rida, Hasan al-Bana and Sayyid Qutb, the work of Arab nationalist and Ba'th ideologue Sati' al-Husary, and the 1960's emergence of Palestinian

²²⁸ Ibid., 71.

nationalist groups such as Fateh, there appears little impetus to compromise.²²⁹ Legrain writes that from 1984 to 1994 there was an increasing polarization between nationalist and Islamic organizations. The great reorganization that followed the *intifada* reconciled Islam with patriotism on the level of ideology, but, "The Islamist/nationalist dichotomy remained on the level of organization."²³⁰ Emanuel Gutman, Department of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, agrees. He writes that the division between religious and secular Palestinian nationalist movements is more pronounced than the more common discriminators of language, religion and race, although the distinction between religion and nationalism breaks down in the Arab world.²³¹

Nation and State

The problems of nation and state in Palestine are revealed in the various policy solutions derived from competing national identities. The Palestinians are a compact minority and are essentially unified regarding a territorial state with formal independence.²³² But the same inter-Arab rivalry that prevents an effective Arab alliance against Israel²³³ and caused the collapse of the Arab regional security regime following

²²⁹ Nafi, 331.

²³⁰ Legrain, 173.

²³¹ Clarke, 8.

²³² Harff, 249.

²³³ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 270.

the Persian Gulf War²³⁴ divides the Palestinians along political, social and religious lines.²³⁵ The competing visions of Palestinians further break down between nationalists and Islamists into those who support self-rule and those desirous of radical change. For example, the nationalist PLO policy that seeks the establishment of two separate states in Palestine enjoyed some 49.8 percent support in the Occupied Territories (OT) in November of 1994. The "Islamic solution" calling for "the liberation of Palestine from the sea to the river" garnered 38.7 percent.²³⁶ The PLO had historically regarded the recovery of territory as its top priority and the basis for Palestinian unity. But Arafat's alliance with the United States and acceptance of Palestine's "Bantustanization" has allowed Islamists to posture as legitimate heirs by the fusion of nationalism and Islamization.²³⁷ Finally, the Palestinian national authority's (PNA) agreement with Israel has given Hamas and the Islamic Jihad a quasi-monopoly on violence and their respective military wings, the *Kataib al-Qassam* of Hamas and *Qasam* of Islamic Jihad, are proving more deadly and efficient every day.²³⁸

²³⁴ Louis J. Cantori, "Regional Solutions to Regional Security Problems: The Middle East and Somalia," *Middle East Policy* 3.3 (1994): 25.

²³⁵ Harff, 246.

²³⁶ Legrain, 174.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

Palestinian Nationalist Weaknesses

The internal weakness of the Palestinian leadership is twofold. Arafat cannot create a secular nationalism until he can overpower religious nationalism. Something the amazing Kemal Ataturk could not do until he had secured Turkey's borders and could abolish the office of the caliphate in 1924.²³⁹ Pan-Islam retains a tremendous following in the OT and Yasir Arafat's pan-Islamic rhetoric appears an indicator of the weakness of secular nationalists, though this is not entirely certain. Nels Johnson argues that, "In contemporary Palestinian political culture, Islamic ideation has become closely interwoven into the fabric of the wider ideological domains of national consciousness and struggle."²⁴⁰ Johnson holds that Arafat's pro-Islamic statements "are susceptible to wide application and interpretation by individuals and groups...and can be both secular and religious in connotation."²⁴¹

Another problem is the specter of a succession crisis when the 69 year old Arafat passes away. PLO officials have denied rumors that Arafat suffers from Parkinson's disease despite his trembling lower lip and sickly appearance. Like most Arab leaders, Arafat has not named a successor and has refused to sign a draft of a transitional constitution that would allow the speaker of the Legislative Council to assume the

²³⁹ Cleveland, 83.

²⁴⁰ Nels Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism* (Boston: Kegan Paul International Ltd, 1982), 65.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

presidency until new elections could be held following Arafat's death.²⁴² Some Western diplomats expect an armed confrontation between factions for Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 62, Arafat's second in command; Jibril al-Rajoub, 42, the West Bank security chief; Mohammad Dahlan, 37, Gaza security chief; and Ahmed Korei, 60, speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council.²⁴³

Islamic Problem Areas

The Islamic problem areas are the role of the state in Islam and whether Islam is incompatible with a modern state. The comprehensive nature of Islam is difficult for Westerners to grasp. A good example is the role of the state in an Islamic society. Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz writes that "Islam, in its precise sense, is a social order, a philosophy of life, a system of economic principles, a rule of government, in addition to its being a religious creed in the narrow Western sense."²⁴⁴ The Islamic ideal of the State is one that enforces the religious laws (*shar'ia*), defends the Islamic community (*umma*), and expands the faith by holy war (*jihad*). Political action is service to God. Hourani quotes Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), "It is a duty to consider the exercise of power as one of the forms of religion, as one of the acts by which man draws near to God."²⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyya held that the essence of government is coercion, "give what is due from you and ask God

²⁴² "Arafat Health Rumours Spark Succession Debate," *Reuters News Service* 8:52 a.m. EST 26 November 1997: 1-3.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴⁴ al-Bazzaz, 173.

²⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyya Taqi al-Din, *Al-Siyasa al-shar'iyya*. Ed. A.S. Nashshar and A.Z. 'Atiyya. 2nd ed. Cairo, 1951. Fr. trans. H. Laoust. *Le Traite de droit public d'Ibn Taymiyya*. Beirut, 1948. quoted in Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 4.

for what is due to you,” and that all rulers who obeyed God and maintained justice were legitimate. Such an idea is the direct opposite of the West’s “sovereignty of the people.”²⁴⁶ Hourani writes that Ibn Taymiyya considered that the unity of the *umma* was essentially one of (mind and heart) voluntary community that shares doctrine, language, law and purpose, but not political form. Ibn Taymiyya thought the *umma* warranted social loyalty over sect or state.²⁴⁷ “To derive glory, outside of Islam and the Qur’an, from one’s birth, country, race, legal school or religious way is to fall into the vanities of paganism.”²⁴⁸ The idea behind this quotation would have seemed reasonable in 16th century Europe but it is not well adapted to the realities of the modern state system.

Is Islam Incompatible with a Modern State?

Such a comprehensive religion as Islam demands the question, “Is it possible to build a modern nation on Islamic principles?” Can an Islamic state produce a prosperous society with equality and freedom of expression? How does one reconcile the existence of states with the Islamic unity of believers? Harff believes a pluralistic society of different religio-ethnic groups is simply incompatible with Islam.²⁴⁹ It is important to note that Kemal Ataturk’s vision of the Turkish nation deliberately manipulated Islam (1923-1928) then, equally deliberately, rejected Islam as the basis for Turkey’s national identity. The Turkish eviction of Islam from the political sphere and the embrace of secular patriotism

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

²⁴⁷ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 19.

²⁴⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, 21.

²⁴⁹ Harff, 250.

remains a stumbling block to application of the Turkish model to the wider Arab world. The enduring tension between secular forces and pious Muslims results from the inability of modernizers to transform Islam from a complete code of public affairs into a personalized path for salvation.²⁵⁰ As a famous Christian Arab scholar said, "Islam has yet to have its Martin Luther." To which challenge, the often heard response is given, "It is not Islamic law that must change to modernize but society which must return to Islam, to conform to God's will."²⁵¹

As Israel survived and flourished in the face of overwhelming hostility the proffered explanations ran the gamut from Arab overconfidence and infighting to Western imperialism. But other analysts looked to the disparities between the two societies: the scientific and technological accomplishments, the economic and social structures and the political liberties of Israel compared with their own. Israel, despite its Middle Eastern population and religio-national identity, is simply part of Western civilization. As such, their success fuels the centuries old quest for Near Eastern scholars to understand Western wealth and power contrasted with Muslim poverty and impotence.²⁵² But a leading Egyptian journalist, Ahmad Baha' Al-Din, is more critical of Arab society. Al-Din writes that Israel's very creation testified to the region's weakness and retarded development. Palestinian society, which represented the wider Arab society, was "predominately agricultural, feudal and primitive" and was entirely lacking

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 249.

²⁵¹ John L Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 217.

²⁵² Lewis, *The Middle East*, 373-4.

"industrialized economics, trade unions, scientific agriculture, and the overall scientifically based approach to everything."²⁵³ Al-Din likens the ineffectual Arab response to the Zionists' arrival to that of the Mamluk Sheikhs who tried to repel Napoleon's invasion by chants and recitations of the Qur'an. Al-Din writes that these failures before Western challenges are proof that "civilization and progress, which have met their death in our land several centuries ago..." flourished in Europe and have "brought about a deep chasm dividing us."²⁵⁴

Edward Said is a good example of the dilemma that confronts Near Eastern apologists. Said eloquently describes the poverty and impotence of the Near East, but does not make the connection between the "deep chasm" and Islam. Said writes that Arab "powerlessness" is the root of all their problems. As though powerlessness was a cause and not an effect. Israel and the West are not excused from their abuses, but, Said acknowledges, the real issue is internal and Arab impotence from within is their central problem. Said calls "cries against the ravages of imperialism and corrupt regimes" simply "litanies of self-exculpation."²⁵⁵ He notes ironically that seven of the world's top ten arms purchasers are Arab countries. Indeed, Arafat has some thirteen military and police units, including sixty naval officers stationed in Nablus, 150 kilometers from the sea.²⁵⁶ To illustrate his point Said quotes V.S. Naipaul's protagonist in *The Mimic Men*: "We [in the

²⁵³ Talhami, 78.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 79.

²⁵⁵ Edward Said, "A Powerless People," *The Arab Review* 5.4 (1996): 31.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

Third World] lack order. Above all we lack power, and we do not understand that we lack power. We mistake words and the acclamation of words for power; as soon as our bluff is called we are lost."²⁵⁷ Said writes that a society with nothing but slogans, such as "peace process," is impotent before the five decades long aggression of Israeli power.²⁵⁸

Briefly, Said skirts dangerous waters, by offering liberal enlightenment explanations for state power. He notes that power must be more than military strength; that social power comes from democracy, and cultural power from freedom of expression and research..., etc. But the tension between the secular and the sacerdotal is such that Said can only offer "self-hatred" as the explanation for the failure of 200 million people to utilize their resources and wield "the kind of power that brings self-respect and seriousness of purpose."²⁵⁹ Said does not ask, let alone answer, the essential question. "Is it possible to build a modern nation on Islamic principles?"²⁶⁰

Regional Problem Areas

The last sets of problem areas are the concerns of regional actors and potential impacts on the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The regional actors we will consider are the expatriate Palestinians. Jordan's King Hussein and the citizens of Israel. Nadim Rouhana writes that the vast majority of the Palestinians in Israel that she interviewed indicated a willingness to accept full Israeli citizenship if they were offered fully integrated status.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 27.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 27.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 31.

²⁶⁰ Harff, 250.

But Rouhana also found the widely held belief that the state and the Jewish people were not interested in an equitable integration.²⁶¹ Indeed, Israeli attitudes toward the Arabs in Israel are declared in the Knesset's amendment to the Basic Law, 31 July 1985. "A list of candidates will not participate in the Knesset elections if in its goals -explicitly or implicitly- it denies the existence of the state of Israel *as the state of the Jewish people*."²⁶² (Italics added) It is difficult to create a secular nation with ethno-religious criteria. Despite this situation, most Arabs in Israel believe that Arabs and Jews can live together, hope that Israel will become a more secular society and consider "Arab regimes nondemocratic and unreliable."²⁶³ This is why, despite the financial and political support given to Palestinians in the OT by the Arabs in Israel, they are still considered sellouts or traitors by those in the OT.²⁶⁴ Likewise, many of the two million Palestinians abroad feel that the 1.3 million Palestinians in the OT have abandoned their concerns for the losses of 1948. Each is convinced that the other can not represent them.²⁶⁵

Concerns of Jordan's King Hussein

The appearance of an autonomous Palestinian state on Jordan's border bodes serious internal problems for King Hussein. East Bank Palestinians, who are not the base

²⁶¹ Nadim Rouhana, "Accentuated Identities in Protracted Conflicts: The Collective Identity of the Palestinian Citizens in Israel," *Asian and African Studies* Haifa 27 (1993): 122.

²⁶² Ibid., 121.

²⁶³ Harff, 224.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 224.

²⁶⁵ Quandt, 424.

of King Hussein's political support, are, already, a near majority in Jordan allowing Israelis to claim that the Palestinians already have a state...in Jordan.²⁶⁶ The Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine and the Hamas support a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. "Islam calls for unity," writes Sheikh Yasin, "when we commit ourselves to Islam, we do not reject any unity, but this unity should be predicated on correct and equal basis."²⁶⁷ Any union with Palestine would place King Hussein's supporters in a distinct and permanent minority and portend difficulties for the Hashemite King.

Concerns of Israelis

Galia Golan, Department of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, addresses the concerns of Israelis. Golan said that many early Jews failed to accept the existence of displaced Palestinians and many of today's Jews view themselves as victims of oppression. They saw the Palestinians, not as a few million powerless people, but as an extension of a larger Arab world with weaponry and oil wealth.²⁶⁸ But Golan notes that the *intifada* changed the Israelis' perception of the costs of occupation and the inevitability of a Palestinian state, though preferably, a state in confederation with Jordan.²⁶⁹ The internal divisions in Israel are roughly among those who wish to retain all of the land west of the Jordan River (Eretz Israel) and those who fear that annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would require the absorption of so large an Arab

²⁶⁶ Harff, 249.

²⁶⁷ Abu-Amr, 134.

²⁶⁸ Clarke, 6.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.

population as to erode the Jewish character of Israel.²⁷⁰ The current debate centers on the demographic impact of such an absorption. Ironically, the point is made that a compact minority of Arabs could be expected to follow the Zionist example. Eventually the Palestinians would assert their right to self-determination and plunge Israel into civil war and strife.²⁷¹

The immediate options available are partition or annexation. Partition was assumed the solution in 1947 and that has not largely changed these fifty years.²⁷² "It is ironic then that, almost half a century and tens of thousands of lost lives later, the two sides have come full circle to realize that, despite its limitations, no better solution can be found."²⁷³ Muhammad Hallaj, Washington, DC Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, writes that the landmark Oslo Accords, September 13, 1993, shifted the debate from Israel's right to exist to the rights of Palestinians. Hallaj believes the Palestinians have reluctantly accepted partition but the Israelis have not.²⁷⁴ Neither partition or annexation is acceptable to both sides. If Israel rejects the creation of a Palestinian state, an option might be a bi-national secular state with individual political, civil and religious rights under a system of

²⁷⁰ Quandt, 423.

²⁷¹ Safran, 101.

²⁷² Quandt, 426-7.

²⁷³ Ran Greenstein, *Genealogies of Conflict: Class, Identity, and State in Palestine/Israel and South Africa* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 230.

²⁷⁴ Clarke, 4.

participatory politics and "federalism."²⁷⁵ But a policy of annexation, with the extension of full civil rights of citizenship, would have few supporters among Palestinians and even fewer among Israelis.²⁷⁶

One of the options considered viable in academic circles is to grant cultural autonomy to disgruntled nationalists with political and economic control retained by the state. But nationalist assumptions that political and cultural affairs are inseparable make these attempts short-lived. "Such attempts only result in artistic, literary, and linguistic matters becoming the subject of acrimonious political disputes, and in being used as weapons in the nationalist struggle."²⁷⁷ Since effective state formation requires the subordination of special interest groups and restraints on ethnic autonomy, few democratic, pluralistic states have been able to effect the integration of ethnic minorities in post-colonial societies.²⁷⁸

This leaves the Israeli polity caught between extremes. The continued expansion of settlements and infrastructure in the West Bank incites Palestinian resistance, however, the majority of the Israeli electorate will not countenance the mass expulsions, imprisonment and executions required of an effective crackdown.²⁷⁹ The same conflicts

²⁷⁵ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Ethnic Conflict and State Building in the Arab World," *Powder Keg in the Middle East: the Struggle for Gulf Security*, Ed. Geoffrey Kemp and Janice Gross Stein (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Liddlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995), 61-2.

²⁷⁶ Quandt, 427-8.

²⁷⁷ Kedourie, 75.

²⁷⁸ Harff, 222-3.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

between religious and secular Palestinian nationalists are also found in Israel. Safran describes the relationship between religion and the state as the most problematic and potentially explosive problem to challenge Israel's national unity. The constant tension between secular and religious nationalists over legislation, education and religious observances has been checked so far by external pressures.²⁸⁰ But if the external threats are relieved the internal tension is sure to increase.

Concerns with the Peace Process

The second area of regional concern is the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Internal issues of religion and nationalism are fundamental to its success. Both the Israeli and Palestinian religious factions speak in sweeping terms such phrases as "Eretz Israel" or Palestine "from the river to the sea," and both ignore the existence of the other. With a compact population such as the Palestinians there are only four options available: genocide, forced population transfers, partition or annexation / assimilation. The desired outcomes of both Israeli and Palestinian religious factions would require genocide or forced population transfers. One side possesses the power to displace the other but lacks the will while the other side possesses the will but lacks the power. Despite this gridlock both accuse their own secular parties of treasonous surrender. Safran's earlier paraphrase of Lincoln applies to both Israel and Palestine, "How long can a nation remain half-sacerdotal, half-secular?"²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Safran, 213.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 200.

Cognizant of the gridlock, Quandt suggests a change in the definition of peace negotiations, from talks aimed at a comprehensive final settlement, to one of a process of political transition.²⁸² Such a step by step process would allow each side to slowly adapt and see new possibilities. For example, alternative types of democratic power sharing such as Lijphart's "consociationalism" or Horowitz's integrative approach²⁸³ both of which would be unsatisfactory to both sides at present. Quandt recommends they begin with steps to expand regional autonomy and use the Swiss cantonal system as a model.²⁸⁴ The Oslo Accords represent such a moderated peace process but the current breakdown underscores the influence of internal conflicts.

²⁸² Quandt, 441.

²⁸³ Timothy Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 36-40.

²⁸⁴ Quandt, 428.

CONCLUSION

With this paper we considered the development of nationalism in Western and Near Eastern contexts and we examined the ideologies competing for Palestinian national identity. Finally, we examined some potential problem areas and the possible influence that internal Palestinian conflicts might wield over the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. The Palestinian people face a daunting task. Their leaders ask, "How do we create a modern state when we do not control the land, the economy or the resources?" The people should ask, "Can we create a modern state, with loyalty to political institutions, without evicting Islam from the public sphere?" and "Can we create a modern state when our leaders refuse us the most basic of rights: freedom of religion, speech, assembly, redress of grievances and the right to bear arms?"

As we contemplate the coming day when the Palestinian people achieve their dream of an independent state, let us remember the words of Edmund Burke,

"I should therefore suspend my congratulations on the liberty of France until I was informed as to how it had been combined with government, with public force, with discipline, with obedience of armies, with the collection and the effectiveness of a well distributed revenue, with morality and religion, with solidity and manners. All these are good things, too. Without them liberty is of no benefit whilst it lasts and is not likely long to continue."²⁸⁵

Those who assume that peace and prosperity are poised to blossom in Palestine, but for Israeli intransigence, are likely to be disappointed. The intense competition among

²⁸⁵ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Legitimacy and Force: Political and Moral Dimensions*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), 7.

secular and religious nationalists in Palestine will likely prove Barbara Harff prescient. "An autonomous Palestinian region will transform ethno-nationalist conflict among the people of the diaspora but not end it."²⁸⁶ The Palestinian-Israeli struggle is much more than a fight over land. The struggle is also the forum for Palestinian debates over nationalism and identity that will determine the nature of their future state.²⁸⁷ Resolution of the internal Palestinian debate is a prerequisite for regional stability.

²⁸⁶ Harff, 249.

²⁸⁷ Abu-Amr, ix.

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